Planning for Improvement

We all share the same goal: to develop healthy children who come to school ready and able to learn. Among the hundreds of individual actions you can take to meet this goal, you've already begun the most important one: appraising your school's strengths and weaknesses. No matter how your school scores on the *School Health Index*, you now have the information you need to start planning for a healthier school.

Taking Action, One Step at a Time

Now that all eight module teams have completed their sections of the *School Health Index*, it is time to summarize the results, reflect on your school's strengths, identify and discuss areas that need improvement, and plan for making improvements.

This section, Planning for Improvement, contains two forms the Overall Score Card and the School Health Improvement Plan, that will help you make the best use of the information collected by each module team.

The four action steps described in this section can help you plan improvements and implement recommended changes.

Step 1:   Complete the Overall Score Card
Step 2:   Complete the School Health Improvement Plan
Step 3:   Implement Recommendations
Step 4:   Reassess Annually and Strive for Continuous Improvement

Step 1: Complete the Overall Score Card

Use the completed module Score Cards to fill in the Overall Score Card (see page 5 of this section). The completed Overall Score Card will help you determine which of the eight areas covered by the *Index* are most in need of improvement. A low score for a module will indicate that the school is not performing well in an area, while a high score will indicate that it is performing well.

Step 2: Complete the School Health Improvement Plan

Bring together the full *School Health Index* team for its second meeting (see sample agenda in Introduction & Instructions, page 16). At this meeting:

- Ask each module team to present its self-assessment and the two or three actions they believe should be implemented first.
- Decide on several actions that the school can to realistically commit to implementing over the course of the year. Having a relatively small number of recommended actions is

important, because pushing for too many changes at once can be overwhelming and reduce your chances of success. Module actions that are not included in the School Health Improvement Plan can be addressed at a later date.

- The group may consider different criteria in deciding which actions to implement first. Some very important actions may be too expensive, too labor-intensive, or too complex to address in the short term. Others may be less important, but may require fewer resources and may be easier to implement. Use the collective judgment and knowledge of your team members. Together, the team knows the school and can arrive at the best mix of important and achievable recommendations.

- Have the team complete the School Health Improvement Plan form (see a sample completed form at the end of this section) as follows:
  - **Actions column**: Write the agreed-upon actions in order of priority.
  - **Steps column**: Write brief descriptions of all the specific steps that need to be taken to implement an action. Examples of action steps include collecting information on the issue, preparing a slide presentation, making presentations at staff and PTA meetings, scheduling a meeting with the school board, and drafting a new school policy.
  - **By Whom and When column**: Write the name of the person who will be responsible for planning and implementing the action steps, when work will begin, and the targeted completion date.

- Decide who will prepare a concise report that summarizes the School Health Improvement Plan, as well as all the recommended actions from all the modules. This report can be presented to the school administrators (or the site decision-making team) for approval and inclusion in the overall School Improvement Plan, and it can guide future school health planning efforts.

- Discuss how the team will monitor implementation of the School Health Improvement Plan and when the team will meet again.

Step 3: Implement Recommendations

When your School Health Improvement Plan has been approved, implement the recommendations and monitor progress. Review the Resource section at the end of the *School Health Index* to identify materials and organizations that can help you implement your actions. Because many actions will require the adoption of new school policies, a particularly valuable resource is *Fit, Healthy, and Ready to Learn: A School Healthy Policy Guide*, published by the National Association of State Boards of Education.

Some actions can be handled quickly and easily by one team member, whereas others may require gathering information, raising funds, or a group effort. A full discussion of project management is beyond the scope of this guide, but here are some general principles:

- **Workgroups.** Form implementation workgroups so that no single person is overwhelmed with responsibility.
- **Short-term and long-term goals**. Most positive changes will take some time to put in place, but delayed gratification can be frustrating for many volunteers. Having a mix of short-term and long-term goals creates some early accomplishments that will keep the team motivated while it tackles the longer-term goals.
- **Timeline.** Create a timeline of activities, and set monthly or quarterly implementation milestones.
- **Assistance.** Ask for help when you need it. See the *School Health Index* Resources section for information on national organizations that might be of assistance. Look for help from the school district, the state department of education, and local universities.
- **Monitoring progress.** Ongoing monitoring of activities and strategies is essential for smooth and successful implementation. Special achievements and problems should be recognized and discussed.
- **Reporting progress.** Establish a mechanism for reporting progress so that there is some level of accountability.
- **Recognition.** Recognize your volunteers. Write letters of appreciation and publicize their good work so that the entire community will know about their contributions.
- **Money.** If you need money but it is not available at the school, don't be shy about visiting local businesses, especially if you need an amount under $1,000. Write a two-page proposal that uses data, such as the data presented at the beginning of the *School Health Index*.

Step 4: Reassess Annually and Strive for Continuous Improvement

Establish an annual *School Health Index* assessment. An annual assessment will ensure that students' health remains high on the school agenda. Take the time to measure and recognize the progress and accomplishments of the previous school year. Report annually to the principal, the superintendent, and the school board on progress made during the past year and plans set for the upcoming year.

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School Health Index
Overall Score Card

For each module (row), write an X in the one column where the Module Score falls

	Low 0 – 20%	Medium 21 – 40%		41 – 60%	61 – 80%	High 81 – 100%
School Health Policies and Environment – Module 1						
Health Education – Module 2						
Physical Education and Other Physical Activity Programs – Module 3						
Nutrition Services – Module 4						
School Health Services – Module 5						
School Counseling, Psychological, and Social Services – Module 6						
Health Promotion for Staff – Module 7						
Family and Community Involvement – Module 8						

School Health Improvement Plan

Instructions

1. In the first column: list, in priority order, the Actions that the *School Health Index* team has agreed to implement.

2. In the second column: list the specific Steps that need to be taken to implement each Action.

3. In the third column: list the people who will be responsible for each Step, when the work will begin, and when it will finish.

Actions	Steps	By Whom and When
1.	**a.** _____	_____
	b. _____	_____
	c. _____	_____
	d. _____	_____
	e. _____	_____
	f. _____	_____
	g. _____	_____

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Actions	Steps	By Whom and When
2.	**a.** _____ **b.** _____ **c.** _____ **d.** _____ **e.** _____ **f.** _____ **g.** _____	
3.	**a.** _____ **b.** _____ **c.** _____ **d.** _____ **e.** _____ **f.** _____ **g.** _____	

Actions	Steps	By Whom and When
4.	a. _____ b. _____ c. _____ d. _____ e. _____ f. _____ g. _____	_____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____
5.	a. _____ b. _____ c. _____ d. _____ e. _____ f. _____ g. _____	_____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____

Sample Completed School Health Improvement Plan

Instructions

1. In the first column: list, in priority order, the Actions that the *School Health Index* team has agreed to implement.

2. In the second column: list the specific Steps that need to be taken to implement each Action.

3. In the third column: list the people who will be responsible for each Step, when the work will begin, and when it will finish.

Actions	Steps	By Whom and When
(1) *Establish new policy to set nutritional standards for competitive foods*	(a) *Contact other schools and experts to identify model policies*	*Sally H. 10/2*
	(b) *Conduct taste tests for healthy alternatives that students like*	*Mildred P. 10/23*
	(c) *Meet with principal to get support*	*Sally H. 10/25*
	(d) *Develop draft policy*	*Henry T. 11/3*
	(e) *Get feedback from teachers, parents, students, administrators, and community members*	*Sally H. 11/15*
	(f) *Develop slide show about policy to staff, students, parents, and district*	*Mildred P. 11/26*
	(g) *Schedule and deliver presentations to staff, students, and parents*	*Henry T. 12/2*